



Reimagining the Chicago Intercity Bus Terminal

A PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE A CRITICAL ASSET UNDER CITY OWNERSHIP

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This report outlines a proposal to dramatically enhance the Chicago Intercity Bus Terminal at 630 W. Harrison through the City of Chicago's planned initiative to acquire the using tax-incremental financing funding. The privately owner terminal, opened in 1989 and designed by Nagle Hartray Associates, has bus bays on two sides, facilities for an indoor restaurant (now closed), and a spacious ticketing area.

The station is in close proximity to major expressways and a CTA Blue Line rapid transit stop, and is walkable from the Loop District and Chicago Union Station. It handles around 500,000 passengers annually, seeing around 80 bus movements (arrivals and departures combined) daily during peak season. Four major lines, Barons Bus, Greyhound Line, FlixBus and Jefferson Lines, use the station, offering coast-to-coast service. Numerous other lines expressed interest in using it If acquired by the city, which could increase peak-season activity to 110+ daily bus movements. A map of routes appears on page 6.

The rendering we provide, prepared using SketchUp, show improvements that do not require major modifications and are intended to illustrate the facility's considerable potential. Our independently produced redesign draws upon multiple site visits, aerial imagery, and technical assistance from the Environmental Law & Policy Center. We summarize the changes on the following pages.



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PHOTO (ABOVE): Renders of the proposed Chicago Greyhound Terminal at 630 W. Harrison with improvements described in this report.



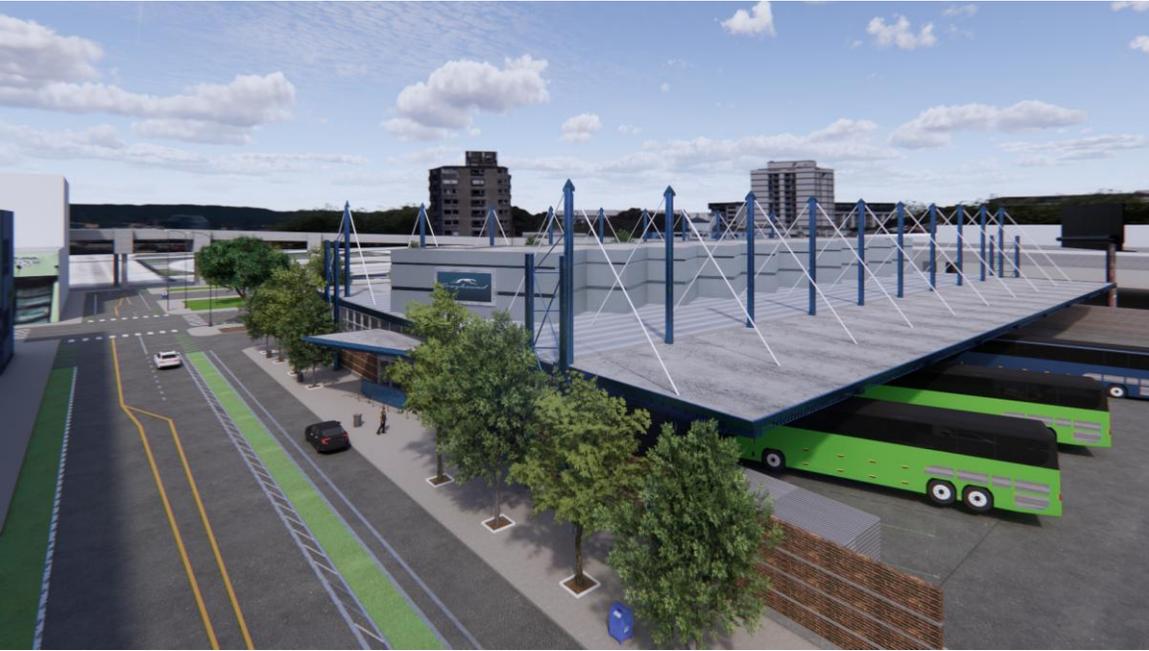
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Scene 1: The station has a striking suspended roof and large waiting room, ticketing area and restaurant space. Our proposal envisions branding the terminal around the “CHI” city code long used as our city’s destination in bus ticketing. We made extensive signage and streetscape improvements and gave the facility a color scheme drawing upon Chicago’s official flag.

FIGURE 1: Existing Conditions



CURRENT CONDITIONS. This northwest-facing view shows existing conditions, with terminal branded “Greyhound” and largely unchanged since 1989. It sorely needs an upgrade due to decades of deterioration.



FUTURE DESIGN. Our design features a new entrance, a changed color scheme (now red, a large “CHI” sign on the roof, and a mural on the self-storage facility across Harrison. We provide close-ups on the following pages.

Scene 2: A centerpiece of our new design is a glass entrance that provides more invitation conditions for traveler access and egress. The entrance is ABA compliant, has an indoor waiting area for those using rideshare, taxis and transit-bus connections, and makes walking on Harrison Street more inviting and secure.



CURRENT CONDITIONS. The existing design requires using steps exposed to rain and snow and an entrance not easily visible for pedestrians walking west along Harrison Street, which is lined with a brick wall.



FUTURE DESIGN. The new design provides panoramic views and a climate-controlled waiting area, has improved wheelchair access, and includes design elements common on airport and rail terminals.

Scene 3: The design takes advantage of unimpeded sightlines from the Dan Ryan and Ida B. Wells expressways. Our design, which includes the oversized CHI lettering on the roof and smaller sign, both showcasing Chicago’s role as a premier transportation hub to passing motorists.



CURRENT CONDITIONS. The existing view from the Ida B. Wells (formerly Congress) Parkway is mundane and suffers from a lack of signage and poor branding.



FUTURE DESIGN. The prominent “CHI” sign and a nameplate sign draw attention to city’s intercity bus terminal and elevates the image of bus travel. Brightly painted beams add to its appeal. The blue polygon shows the location of a possible new western entrance to the Clinton Blue line transit station. The mural can also be seen from Parkway.

Other scenes: Colorful design elements, including a sign on Harrison Avenue sign listing the names of bus companies, and two large murals that could be installed through an agreement with the neighboring property owner to enliven the area. Charging stations prepare the facility for services using battery-operated coaches



INFORMATION SIGN. A sign on Harrison Street shows in bus line using the terminal



MURALS ON HARRISON. A “Welcome to Chicago” mural and wayfinding sign on Harrison adds to A smaller mural showing a Chicago map is in distance



ENTRANCEWAY INTERIOR. The interior of the glass entrance has an ADA-compliant ramp (absent from the current terminal), digital signs indicating bus arrivals and departures, and automatic doors.

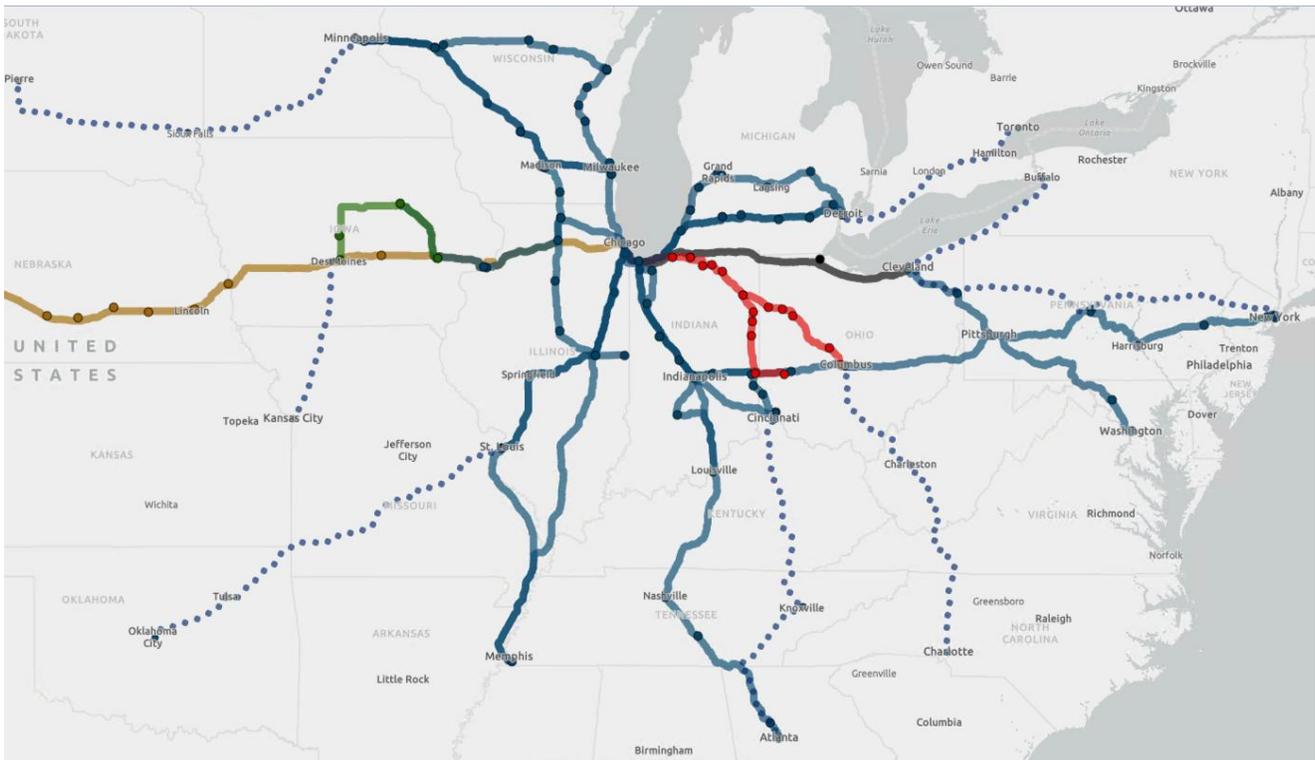


ELECTRIC CHARGING. Several bus bays on the east side are equipped with electric charging stations to allow for the introduction of battery-operated coaches.

Route Map: This map shows the range of service offered from the Chicago Intercity Bus Terminal on February 5, 2026. Additional routes are offered by bus lines not using the terminal, and others will likely be added for the summer travel season.

This map shows the extensive hub-and-spoke design of the Chicago terminal. The line through Nebraska extends to Denver, CO, allowing for well-timed connections to the West Coast. Direct routes to Bloomington and Peoria, IL, as well as additional Michigan service, would likely be added if the station is brought under public ownership.

Map of Intercity Bus Routes from the Chicago Terminal, February 2026



Legend	
FlixBus-Greyhound	—
Barons Bus	—
Barons Bus + Greyhound	—
Jefferson Lines + Greyhound	—
Jefferson Lines	—
Notable connecting route

AUTHORS & STUDY TEAM



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AUTHOR: NATHALE ADELE NICOLETTI, is an architect and urban planner who is principal designer of the renderings in this report, which were created using SketchUp and Enscape. She has professional experience in Brazil working on high-rise residential and commercial projects across all project phases, often leading feasibility, massing, and early design studies. She works as an urban planning assistant at the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development while pursuing a graduate degree in Sustainable Urban Development at DePaul.



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